

Chapter 5: Ancient Egypt

Lesson 1 Gift of the Nile

MAIN IDEAS

Geography The Nile River helped Egypt develop a civilization.

Economics The fertile land provided everything Egyptians needed.

Economics The Nile and other resources influenced Egypt's economy.

Geography of Ancient Egypt

ESSENTIAL QUESTION Why was the Nile River important?

The Longest River

- Nile River is 4,160 miles long, the world's longest river
 - begins near equator in Africa, flows north to Mediterranean Sea
- South has **cataracts**—waterfalls
- **Delta**—area near river's mouth; water leaves **silt**—fine soil
- Heavy rains flooded Nile every summer
 - soil left on shores was **fertile**—good for growing crops

Red Land, Black Land

- Ancient Egyptians lived in narrow land on sides of Nile
 - called region the black land because of fertile soil
 - red land was desert beyond fertile region
- Eight months of year were sunny, hot
 - four months of winter were sunny, cooler
- One inch of rain a year in most of region

Isolation

- Desert acted as barrier to enemies
- Sea coast was swampy with no good harbors
- Early Egyptians stayed close to home

REVIEW QUESTION

What did the floods of the Nile River provide for farmers?

Land of Plenty

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did Egyptians use the land around the Nile?

Agricultural Techniques

- Egyptians watched for ibises to determine flood, planting seasons
- By about 2400 B.C., farmers used technology to expand farmland
 - dug irrigation canals to carry water to dry areas
 - used shadufs to spread water across fields

Egyptian Crops

- Grew vegetables, fruits; were first to grind wheat into flour
 - mixed flour with yeast and water to make bread
- Wove flax plant fibers into **linen**—lightweight cloth
 - wore clothing made from linen

Egyptian Houses

- Houses built with bricks of mixed mud and straw
 - narrow windows, white walls reduced sunlight, heat
 - sticks, palm trees woven into roof; reed mats covered floor
- Nobles had fancy homes, courtyards, pools
- Poor people cooled off on roof; cooked, ate, slept outside

REVIEW QUESTION

What agricultural techniques did ancient Egyptians use?

Geography Shapes Egyptian Life

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What economic activities developed in Egypt?

Mining

- Copper was used for tools, weapons as early as 6000 B.C.
 - Egyptians later sought iron, which was stronger
- Africa's richest gold mines in upper Nile; area called Nubia
- Mining minerals was difficult in hot Sinai Peninsula east of Egypt
 - chipped rock to get at hidden mountain veins
- Mined precious stones such as turquoise, lapis lazuli

Fishing and Hunting

- Reed rafts used for river travel; caught fish with nets, harpoons
- Some hunters speared hippopotamuses, crocodiles
- Hunted quail and duck with nets, boomerangs

Transportation and Trade

- Later used sails to let wind carry boats south on Nile
 - when following current north, used oars, paddles for speed
- Began to barter—trade goods with no exchange of money

REVIEW QUESTION

How did geography affect Egypt's economy?

Lesson Summary

- The Nile River created a fertile land in a desert.
- The Egyptians used technology to expand their farms and grow many crops.
- Ancient Egyptians also mined, fished, hunted, and traded.

Why It Matters Now . . .

Ancient Egyptians invented many things we use today, such as yeast bread, turquoise jewelry, and linen clothes.